

Masthead Logo

Archives Alive

3-7-2014

Jim Just Wants Some Mail

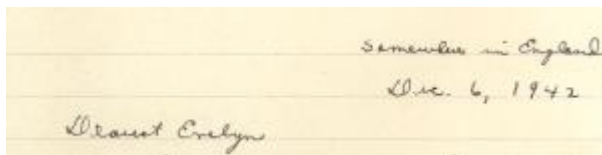
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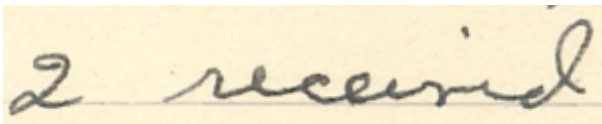
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A Letter from Clarence?

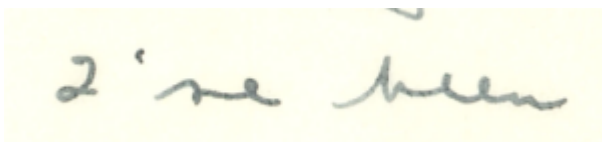
A letter written to Evelyn on Dec. 6, 1942, by an unnamed soldier, seems to have lost the piece of the letter that includes a signature. After listening to presentations by my peers and seeing their letters' handwriting and context, my letter is possibly the same author one of my classmates' letters. We may not know for certain this letter was written by Clarence Clark, but we do know he is "Somewhere in England." It was not uncommon for soldier to not be able to reveal their exact location or give details of their military life during WWII. Evelyn's letter, however, seems to be very positive and include mostly good things about his travels) and inquiries of her life at home, which are topics consistent with other letters written by Clarence.



The Beginning Title of Evelyn's Letter



"I received" from (possibly Clarence's) letter in December of 1942



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"I've Been" from Clarence's August 1943 letter



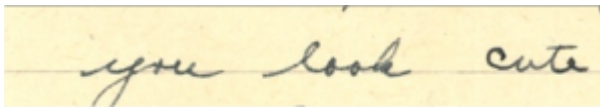
Heading from another letter to Evelyn (same letter used by Patrick Taffe)

He begins by telling her about his intended day off and how it was taken to be used as a day to celebrate "someone or another" with a parade. This, is not a negative aspect of the day for he says he, "don't mind the parade but [he] sorta like to take things easy on Sundays." Here he is implying that normally Sunday is a day for relaxation and that even though he is oversees for the war effort, life is not all that bad. He does try to evoke a little sympathy from Evelyn, for not having the opportunity to relax, but overall is very nonchalant about the ordeal.

He then shifts conversation towards Evelyn, and how happy he is to hear from her and receive her letter. He proceeds to poke fun at her by asking how her bicycle riding is developing. He focuses his attention on her looking cute on her bicycle. This activity was very popular pre-war and dwindled because of supplies during World War II. However, towards the end of 1941, bicycles began to come back into production. Very skeletal versions were created in order to save the majority of materials for the war effort. This bike was referred to as, "The Victory Bicycle" according to the National Museum of American History. So, in this respect, the action of riding a bicycle was a much grander activity than the common use of bicycles today. It truly was news worthy and not so unusual for an adult to be new at riding a bike. Clarence shifts the focus from the war, and the fact that he is abroad to the happy aspect of hearing from her and hearing her stories. With the use of the word "cute" to describe how she must look riding, it can be inferred that he may have been flirting a little with Evelyn. We know after our conversations with Evelyn that the two were never more than friends, so perhaps the flirtation was just for fun and a good distraction for Clarence.

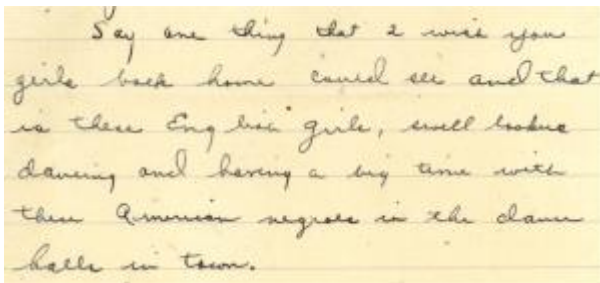


WAVE Peg Dudley at Key West Naval Air Station and Soldiers and Civilians on base at McCellan Field, Sacramento, California on May 7th, 1942 (From The Fox River Trolley Museum)



Portion of letter where he comments on her bicycle riding

In this letter, Clarence speaks of his travels in England. Based on other letters, Clarence saw travel throughout the United States before his time in England and took part in the Occupation of Sicily afterwards. His time in England seems to be low key and does not involve a lot of action. This could be partially due to censorship, but even so, his letter to Evelyn is very convincing that life overseas is nothing to worry about and he is not in danger.



Portion of Letter about dances in England

On the second page of the letter he begins to talk about dances that are held on Friday nights and how the swell English girls enjoy dancing with the negro men. By reminiscing about the parties and how entertaining it is to watch everyone dance and have a good time he is implying to Evelyn that she is missing out on seeing these things. Also, around the 1940s in America, the mixture of white girls and negro boys was not as common as it is today, so this was probably a new sight to Clarence and he wanted to share it

with Evelyn. He even takes a moment to criticize the "rotten" music and how he himself does not enjoy the dancing or specifically the song, "Praise the Lord." On the following page, he boasts about his visit to Oxford University and the tour he received there. He then continues on to tell her how he misses her but must finish things over there first. Here, he is possibly trying to make himself sound heroic and patriotic. Perhaps he does this to impress her and cause a little flirtation. He only gives light to exciting things happening overseas to ease her worries and is censored enough that he includes very little details about the war itself.



Oxford University

Not only does he make Evelyn feel missed, by not enjoying the dancing, but he is comforting her and putting her mind at ease by retelling all of the normalcies he experiences away from home. Watching people dance, listening to poor music, and being a little busier than normal on Sundays, are all experiences he could have at home. He puts a positive spin on the letter by making his life relatable to hers and not as foreign as it may seem. He misses her, but he has his duty to finish. Life is not so bad over there, and he tells her all the good things he can to make her believe only things going on overseas and she need not worry about him.

[Original Letter](#)

(n.d.) National Museum of History. 1942 *Victory Bicycle*. Retrieved from http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1313316.

(n.d.) *Periodic Bicycle Rally Along Fox River Trail*. Retrieved from <http://www.railstovictory.com>.

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